

Welcome to the Event Tech Podcast, where we explore the ever-evolving world of event technology every week. This show is brought to you by Endless Events, the event AV company that doesn't suck. Now, let's talk tech.

Brandt Krueger:

Hello, everybody and welcome to the Event Tech podcast. He is Will Curran of Endless Events.

Will Curran:

And he is the unused Brandt Krueger.

Brandt Krueger:

Unused! Oh! Oh, that hurts.

Will Curran:

I, I was ... I mean, I was ... That could be positive like you're unused. There's so much potential.

Brandt Krueger:

Like the driven snow.

Will Curran:

Like you haven't reached your full potential. Kind of like utilize you. It could be positive.

Brandt Krueger:

All right. I'll buy it. I'll buy it. All right. You talked me into it. The unused. It's like the unsullied.

Will Curran:

The unsullied. Now, you're getting into my future. Now, I have to change my schedule because I'm using unsullied in 16 weeks.

Brandt Krueger:

Oh, sorry. Okay. I didn't mean to mess with your adjective schedule. Will, what are we talking about today, Will?

Will Curran:

Well, this is kind of like a topic that I've been having a lot recently at different conferences, especially with different platforms when it comes to primarily like event apps but this definitely can be applied to a lot of different things but we're mainly talking about event app platforms. There's kind of this debate that goes on between all the different platforms. You have these ones that are a master platform that has every single feature you could ever use that's in one single thing.

Will Curran:

For example, like a platform that's not an event platform that would be considered, this is like HubSpot for example. It has your social media. It does your landing pages. It does your sales CRM. It's all in one single one. But then there's the other side of the debate, which is the I want to be good at one single thing and that's the one thing I'm good at and maybe, hopefully, I integrate with everything else, so each individualized tool.

Will Curran:

So, I sit very much in the middle between this because I see both sides and I thought it was a really cool debate that we could have in discussion for people to think about when it comes to choosing event technologies. Is it the master ... Oh, yeah. Go ahead.

Brandt Krueger:

No, no, no. I stepped on your touchdown call.

Will Curran:

Oh, yeah. No. I was going to say, yeah. Is it the master of none or is it the jack-of-all-trades or is it what is the go-to choice in what you should choose?

Brandt Krueger:

It's funny. It's the same kind of discussion that I've had over the years about people, to be perfectly honest, about the master of none thing always kind of bothered me because it feels a little negative. So, I've always kind of gone with more of the specialist versus generalist, a specialized service or a specialized person who they are an A1, they're a sound board engineer, or it's someone who has a little bit of talent in a bunch of different areas can do any one of them okay but so as more of a generalist.

Brandt Krueger:

I've always thrown myself into the latter. It really does apply to apps and platforms as well. I think you've hit the nail quite well on the head that you start looking at some of these juggernauts like Cvent, that has one of everything. They've got a module for this and a module for that and a module for this and a module for that versus piecing it together and having this module is really good at the CRM part of it. This module's really good at the registration part of it. This module's really good ... And getting those from different vendors.

Will Curran:

Totally. I agree 100% and I think that what ends up happening is ... There's not necessarily there's going to end up being ... I mean, there might be an answer at the end of this, after we really talk in depth about it but it's funny how everyone seems to have their own opinion of it.

Will Curran:

But what's interesting, too, is that there are also platforms that are jack-of-all-trades but also integrate with a ton of different things. For example, I think I was just literally just record an episode of Event Icons a couple weeks ago, in EventMobi's office. They were talking about that.

Their whole thing is that they have certain sections of it and they're happy to integrate into one small piece but they're also happy to be the larger platform. I think that's really, really cool but I think you can definitely get into it.

Will Curran:

So, maybe if we just choose each one and kind of talk a little bit about pros and cons of each one and maybe go down the line, because that's...

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah, exactly. So, let's fire it off with, let's go with the juggernaut first. Let's go with the all-in-one.

Will Curran:

The master.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. The master of none in yours, the general in mine.

Will Curran:

There you go. There you go. Okay. Let's start with this. When you have everything in one single place, the database is shared so less data entry, less physical work you typically have to do because it's all-in-one, right?

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. Those systems are going to talk to each other most of the time. I have run into the situation where, especially with a lot of the acquisitions and conglomeration going on that they haven't quite got all of those things talking together as well as you would hope. So, a lot of times in the sales pitch, it's coming off of, "Oh, yeah. We've got this and we've got this and we've got this." But since these platforms were, at one time, independent platforms, they're a little bolted on. At least though, they're working on it. Does that make sense that they're working behind the scenes to streamline that process to get those things talking to each other? It might just still be not quite as seamless as you want it to be so that's important to kind of know, or were these products developed simultaneously, in conjunction with each other or, at the very least, by the same kind of developer before they were bolted together and forced to talk to each other?

Will Curran:

That's true. I guess that's also, I mean, a potential pro as well that you kind of talk about. Obviously, like you said, sometimes, these tools can kind of seem added on but also if it's sometimes they are added on, a lot of times, their interfaces are very similar. They're design language so you don't really have to learn a whole new tool as well.

Will Curran:

For example, when ... Again, I just go back to because I'm in it all the time, is HubSpot is, when they added the CRM for example, it wasn't unnatural because it followed all the design language of the marketing platform so you didn't have to really learn where things were, how the contact record worked, everything like that. Sometimes, when a new feature comes out for a software, I get really excited because they figured out how to put their own spin on it a little bit in a little way, you know?

Brandt Krueger:
Right, right, right.

Brandt Krueger:
So, yeah. How that data talks to each other is a huge chunk of the pro of going with an all-in-one solution that's going to cover you from soup to nuts, from start to finish.

Brandt Krueger:
So, if data is one of your primary points, that's something you're going to want to keep in mind as far as making sure that things flow.

Brandt Krueger:
Now, that being said, a lot of the independent companies, we're going to come back around to this are, like you said, fully happy to integrate with whoever you want them to integrate with.

Will Curran:
Absolutely and I guess a con, too, if I'm ... I was almost going all pro team on the master-of-none team. I got to come out with, what do you call it? The juggernaut. We're going to call this the juggernaut category, right?

Brandt Krueger:
Well, yeah. It's the all-in-one versus bolting it all together yourself.

Will Curran:
Yeah. I got to stop calling it the master of none because it seems I'm just insulting it every single time.

Brandt Krueger:
Right, right, right.

Will Curran:
So, there is pros of it but one potential con of it as well is that or a con of ... Or a pro, sorry. This actually is a pro. Sorry. That if you do have this data all-in-one place, it's less chances for something to go wrong in the process.

Brandt Krueger:

Yes. Yes, absolutely.

Will Curran:

So, I used to see this all the time. We used to have a separate CRM separate from the marketing. One of the reasons why I chose to go to an all-in-one is that if in theory, yes, all these things like Zapier exist where hey, yeah! You do this in this platform and then it automatically goes in here but there's always the chance that it could fail. Most of the time you never notice it fails because you're not sitting here looking at the activity history of all these integrations and there's usually not like an email notification that pops up and says, "Hey. This data didn't make its way over." It's usually you just don't know until-

Brandt Krueger:

Right, right.

Will Curran:

... you're like, "Where is this? Where ... Wait. That customer didn't make its way over right? Oh, my gosh. My registration didn't make its way into the event management platform and they never got the email saying, 'Hey,' to sign up for your different breakouts?" Well, that can be a major problem, too.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah, or a couple of fields got switched, like this got dumped into that field and this got dumped into that field or something like that.

Will Curran:

Totally. Now, their last name is their first name on accident because something got mapped wrong. Something weird like that.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Anytime you're bolting together systems that don't natively talk to each other, that's when you start to run into the possibility of that. Now, obviously all the vendors are going to be working as hard as possible to prevent that from happening, but it's something to keep in mind. So, if your data is keeping your data clean, keeping your data accurately translated is mission critical, that's when you need to start looking at those all-in-one solutions.

Will Curran:

Totally, totally. Did you have any other pros and cons, as I'm formulating a couple different ideas.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. Yeah. All-in-ones, I mean, the other thing, the biggest thing on all of these things and whether it's AV or people or app companies is, it's a trade-off on time as much as it is on money as well, that a lot of what I do as a technical producer is lining up AV bits. So, I'm taking that off

the plate of the planner because they don't have time to deal with all of that stuff. Same goes with the all-in-one solution versus putting it all together. It just takes time to find the right platform that's going to do exactly what you need, tailored perfectly to your needs versus it just works out of the box with all of these different modules.

Brandt Krueger:

Some of that is personality-type. There's certain planners in the world that really just want it to come out of the box and work right away. Then, there's some that actually kind of like piecing it together to get exactly what they want, the right DIY solution of this is the perfect registration solution for us, this is the perfect name badge printing solution, this is the perfect digging through the data afterwards analytic solution.

Brandt Krueger:

So, some of it is personality type and some of it is time and time almost always translates into money, so being able to just get it and go versus I want to have something that's more tailored for me and my organization.

Will Curran:

Totally. One thing I think you brought up, we kind of danced a little bit around it but I'll definitely hop on it as well is the idea of cost, too. A lot of times, these what we call the generalist all-in-one solutions sometimes can be really expensive.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah, yeah.

Will Curran:

As a huge platform. You may be spending \$1,000 a month versus a lot of \$10 a month tools all together or \$20 a month tools so they sometimes seem really, really expensive because, wow, it's just really, really expensive, but then when you break it down, you go, "Oh, well. It does this. And that would normally cost me this and that would normally cost me this." Obviously, it all depends but I remember that was a big debate that I had whenever I adopted an all-in-one tool was, "Oh, wow! Look how expensive it is." But then you realize how many different tools are under that plate. Doesn't make financial sense. You guys, you just have to decide on your own, right?

Brandt Krueger:

Right. And there's different levels of all-in-ones too. I think we need to be acknowledge that, that there's kind of Cvent level of everything. Then, there's still plenty of other all-in-ones underneath that. And depending on which one you use, you're going to have either the ability of nope, you're buying the whole smash, and then, like you said, that tends to be very expensive, but a lot of the ones will just say, "No. You're only enabling this module versus that module."

Brandt Krueger:

Now, there's pros and cons to that model as well. It's because you're like, "Oh, yeah. I just want to be able to do that." They're like, "Oh, yeah. That's another module. You have to pay another \$199 a month," or whatever, because that gets annoying, too, when you're doing it that way.

Will Curran:
Oh, my gosh!

Brandt Krueger:
I've definitely run into software over time where it's like, "Oh, what," and, "Oh, yeah. That's a different module. We need to do it. Oh, yeah. That's a different module. Oh, yeah."

Will Curran:
Oh, the worst.

Brandt Krueger:
That gets even, though but again, that can be cost saving measure so there's pros and cons to that type of model as well that you're only paying for what you're using and as opposed to diving in full-on with a full platform.

Will Curran:
That's true. That's very true. One thing I think I'll jump around a little bit. Potential cons, too, of I find of all-in-one platforms. Again, this is me, I think, stereotyping a little bit on the tools and I usually find when they do so much stuff, they tend to be, I'm just going to use the word ugly. The interfaces don't tend to be beautiful. They don't tend to be usually the easiest to use because there's just so much stuff to develop with it.

Will Curran:
Obviously, there's exceptions to this, 100% but I found that usually when these big master platforms exist, usually the reason why they've gotten so big is because they've been in existence for so long, so therefore, they tend to have a lot of old code and a lot of old design and tends to make it not look as pretty. You don't really usually get this clean, sleek, simple tool. You tend to get this juggernaut of complexity.

Will Curran:
Maybe that's also another portion as well, is that while these tools, sometimes, these generalist all-in-one tools are just so complex, like there's ... You have to know about every little feature. You really need to get almost certified in the software, which I think is very much happening now.

Brandt Krueger:
They literally have certifications for some of these softwares.

Will Curran:

And I mean very much true. I mean, you look at HubSpot, for example. I remember when I first got into it, I was like, "Wow! There's just so much here." And, to be honest, it took me to plug in and click on every link, go in every setting to really become an advanced user where I felt like I had full control of the software. That's sometimes can be overwhelming and almost to the point, and I know this is a massive problem with these larger platforms is that adoption rates and churn with users is that they get on, they're like, "Yeah. This sounds so amazing." They get in there, they're overwhelmed that they don't ever end up using it.

Will Curran:

That's why they want you to sign a year-long contract so you really have to commit for a whole year before you can really fully utilize the tool, which makes sense also from a user standpoint, too, like, "Hey, if you're on it for a year, you're probably going to learn the tool," versus, "I'll sign up for a month. Oh, I never ended up using it. Let me cancel it."

Brandt Krueger:

I'm not going to mention any names but I've definitely seen that churn on some of the app platforms that are out there where they clearly were A, undercutting the competition in an effort to get growth to secure funding and things like that so they could say, "Hey, look at our growth rate. Look at our growth rate," and locking people into one- and two- and three-year contracts. Then, the second those contracts were up, everyone was off. They're like, "No. This is ... I'm so done with you."

Will Curran:

So done. So done.

Brandt Krueger:

I'm not mentioning any names.

Will Curran:

Yeah. I know. No, no, no, no, no. I mean, it goes to show, too. I learned a lot about ... I keep utilizing as an example what I feel it's really fair so I'm not calling out any specific event apps but HubSpot, if you read the book, it's called The Sales Acceleration Formula. It talks about how they built their sales team. They talked a lot about how they built their sales team. It's really interesting, as I'm a user of that software, to understand what was going through their mind to build a sales team that would sell better. What they realized is that customer success was lined up to how long you were on the software, these massive platforms and that, if you only signed up for a month, you tended to leave earlier, like we were just talking about. But what's interesting is and I'm sure this is very similar across all companies, they tend to sign sales commissions to how long you sign your contract for. So, for example, at HubSpot, I don't know if anyone knows this or even cares about this. I may be getting too nerdy but they basically set-

Brandt Krueger:

On this show? Never. Never too nerdy.

Will Curran:

Never too nerdy. That should be our tagline.

Brandt Krueger:

Bring it, yeah.

Will Curran:

They basically said, "Hey, if the customer signs for a year-long contract, we'll give you 100% of your commission up front but if they sign for a six-month commission, you get 50% up front and 50% at the end of the six months. Then, every single time that they go smaller and smaller monthly contracts, things like that, the sales person gets less commission. So, the sales person is incentivized to get you into these long contracts sometimes with these bigger softwares as well. I'm sure that model is very, very identical in the event space as it is in the SaaS marketing space as well.

Brandt Krueger:

Not surprised at all. Based on what I've seen for a lot of the pricing and the pushing to get into longer-term contracts, I would not be surprised at all if those models have leaked over into our industry.

Will Curran:

For sure. For sure.

Will Curran:

I got another one pro/con to throw at.

Brandt Krueger:

Sure.

Will Curran:

Is potentially with the more all-in-one tools, too. Customizability is much lower.

Brandt Krueger:

Yes!

Will Curran:

And if it isn't really customizable, it tends to be really expensive to do it or really complex to do it but you don't tend to have a lot of nitty-gritty control into what you can do.

Will Curran:

So, I'll give an example of this. Again, I hope everyone's okay that I'm using HubSpot so much. I just know it so well.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. It's a product that you use literally on a daily basis. You are all in HubSpot.

Will Curran:

No, no.

Brandt Krueger:

You go just-

Will Curran:

All in, all in.

Will Curran:

Yeah, basically, basically. I mean, literally, I have 16 HubSpot tabs just open all the time. So, this a great example of how they went from specialized and really went to this massive tooling, went from a marketing software to having the sale software. They just added this service element, which is all about ticketing and chat and everything like that and surveying. For a while, we used to do all our surveying with the other side, the specialist tool that only did surveying. We had a tool just did MPS erase, a tool that did our bigger surveys, but then HubSpot came out and said, "Hey, we do all of that." I was like, "Cool. I'm going to migrate over to that and have it in one tool."

Will Curran:

And what was interesting is that there are surveys that get sent out via email are not customizable as much, which is ironic because they obviously have an email tool and they're getting better, but I don't have a lot of customizability into the design and everything like that. Granted, they've done a good job, that their designs look really good already, but if it would been ugly, I might not have chosen that tool and continue to use it because I didn't have the customizability.

Brandt Krueger:

Are we going to have to do a dedicated HubSpot episode, just so you can get it all off your chest and-

Will Curran:

Probably at some point, at some point.

Brandt Krueger:

... how do you use HubSpot as an event prop? All right. Let's get that in the doc.

Will Curran:

Yeah. I was going to make sure that's in the document. Yeah, so I just find that the customizability on sometimes the larger platforms isn't really there and if it is, you look at, for example, Salesforce, everyone notoriously gets so angry at how Salesforce is so ... It is extremely customizable. It is by far the most powerful CRM out there but you have to be damn good at understanding how to use it to be able to do that customizability. Sometimes it costs thousands of dollars.

Brandt Krueger:

And it's the difference between ultimately customizable. I'm trying to think of the best way to phrase this. You can do anything with a web page if you know what you're doing but you have to know code and things like that, versus drag and drop. So, if you're building a web page, you can either use a service where you can drag or drop stuff or, if you know someone or are able to code, you're able to really customize things.

Brandt Krueger:

So, there's something to be said for the elegance of the ease of use and the drag and drop and just make it pretty and that kind of thing. So, I always try to look for platforms that try to offer both where you've got that ease of use, you've got that easy drag and drop but if you really need to, you can get under the hood and start making ultimate customizations to make it exactly what you want.

Brandt Krueger:

So, that tends to handle the majority of users and planners. You're going to have that kind of ability and some of the smaller, more nimble platforms seem to have that a lot better, where on the front end, it's drag and drop. I'm thinking event apps right now. You've got the little emulator over on the right where you can see what your app is going to look like and you can drag in the various modules. You can change the color. You can change the graphics. That's all great for the average user but then, when you need to, you can go in the back end and start changing the actual underlying web code that's making it all go.

Will Curran:

Yeah. I mean, you're 100% spot on.

Brandt Krueger:

I'll throw one more wrench in here unless you've got more that you want to talk on on that particular topic of it.

Will Curran:

No. I was going to ask you if you had any more about master. I was ready to kind of share the flip side of the specialist and why I like specialist software, too.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. This seems like a good spot to throw it in. So, we've got another option that kind of falls into the specialist category, I would say, that I think is worth just bouncing on for a couple of minutes. That is a lot of companies start to then roll their own software. So, they're not happy with the juggernaut. They're not happy with the specialist softwares that are out there. They're like, "Oh, you know, we've got coders. Let's do it ourselves."

Will Curran:
Oh, wow!

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah, so the roll-your-own event app or the roll-your-own registration system. It's actually the registration side's probably a lot more common because you get so many people that are doing it in Excel spreadsheets and just taking the data off of forms online and then rolling their own registration from that.

Brandt Krueger:

So, I just want to touch just real quick and we talked about this in some other episodes about the pros and cons of rolling your own. The pro obviously is it is going to be exactly what you want. You have complete and utter control over every single aspect of the app or the software that you're using. You're able to get it to do exactly what you want it to do. So, it's not surprising that a lot of platforms actually start that way. We're like, "Hey, we've got this program and we started building this registration software for it because we didn't like what was out there." Suddenly, three years later, they're like, "Now, it's a product."

Brandt Krueger:

I've heard that story so many times from app founders and things like that where that's how it began. That's great. That's a great story, kind of rags to riches. The downside of rolling your own is you now are 100% completely responsible for the support of that app.

Brandt Krueger:

So, I've definitely seen that more than a couple of times where a big company was like, "Screw this. We're going to do our own," and they set their own internal coders and things like that to it. It takes six months to build because they're also the coders for a really big company doing this stuff that they have to do for the really big company X.

Brandt Krueger:

They finally get it done and it's mostly what they want, but now they're trying to squash bugs and having to go back to those coders that have their day job as really big coders for company X. They get to it when they get to it or they're on site and suddenly, there's a bug in the software. They're not going to be able to drop what they're doing as coders for really big company X to handle your little bug in your event app that you had built.

Brandt Krueger:

So, I've seen Fortune 500 companies start with an independent app platform. Say, "Heck with this. We're going to roll our own. Why are we paying for this?" Build their own, take all the time and effort to do that. Then, within a year, go right back to the platform because it was such a hassle.

Brandt Krueger:

So, you just have to bear those things in mind that much like when we've talked about AV and doing your own AV and owning your own equipment, yes, you can do that. Yes, it's going to save money but then you're responsible for it. Where are you going to store it? You can't just put it in Bob's cubicle down in the office. So, same thing with event apps. If you're going to roll your own software, whether it's registration or event apps, make sure you're taking into account the upkeep, the maintenance, the bug squashing, adding features, changing things at the last minute. All of those things need to be kept in mind.

Will Curran:

Yeah. I mean, you bring up a good point. I'm very firm in my opinion of don't reinvent the wheel so I don't think I can be unbiased in this one because every time I've ever thought about building a tool or anything like that, if you know how to use Google well enough, somebody's already figured it out and done it really, really well.

Will Curran:

A great example of this and we did our episode a while ago called all the apps I think that we use. I used an app called Float to do all of our budgeting. Honestly, we started by building our own spreadsheet to do it all. It's basically a weekly cash flow analysis that allowed us to see every single category, where I spent over budget, under budget and every single P&L. It literally took us, the spreadsheet broke all the time. Then, eventually, I was like, "You know what? I should build an app that does this."

Will Curran:

Then, one of my buddies who does app development, I was like, "Hey, let's do this," blah, blah. He's like, "Are you sure this doesn't exist?" He kind of pushed me to do my usual due diligence I usually doing. Once I finally figured out what it was called and I was looking for a cash flow forecasting tool that integrated with QuickBooks or Xero, boom, I found it. It existed and it's way better than I would have ever built. That's just my opinion on that end as well. So, if you're cool with it, let's flip over to the specialist side because I have a couple of opinions on this as well.

Brandt Krueger:

Let's go.

Will Curran:

So, it's funny because I think I can go either way. There are some tools I have ... So, you might be thinking so far, "Wow, Will. You must be such a big fan of all-in-one platforms if you use HubSpot." But, I'm also extremely on the other end. I think HubSpot's the only generalist tool

that I really use. Everything else in my entire workflow is extremely specialized and extremely integratable.

Will Curran:

So, I think if you're looking at specialized, the first thing you have to look at is specialized but with integrations. I think that if you're choosing a specialized tool, unless it's really only that one thing, you have to make sure that has native integrations as well. And I don't know if we've talked about this quite on the show yet at this point.

Brandt Krueger:

I don't think ... Yeah.

Will Curran:

The difference between native integrations and non-native.

Brandt Krueger:

Kick it out.

Will Curran:

But a lot of times, people see and they go on the website and it says, "Integrates with every tool." Then, when it ends up happening is I always, one of my favorite pages on an app page is to find the integrations page and show you all the tools that it integrates with, A, because I can see if it's going to integrate to the tools I already use, how is it going to integrate, but I hate when I see so many apps and I'm like, "Wow! They spent a lot of time on their integrations. Then, I click on it and it takes me to a page that says, "Yes, connectable via Zapier." I just go, "Gosh darn it." I get kind of frustrated because I love Zapier. I think it's a great tool. However, you can't rely on it to be the non-native integration. That's an example of non-native integration.

Brandt Krueger:

You mentioned Zapier a couple of times and on a previous episode, so give us the 30 seconds of what it is.

Will Curran:

Yeah. Basically, it's an if this happens, then this happens with any app, so you can say, "If someone registers for your event, automatically enter them into your CRM." So, you can take from one tool into another tool to basically do anything.

Will Curran:

Now, they have multisteps so you can say like, "Someone registers for the event. Add them to the CRM, then add them into the event management platform. Then, send a Slack notification that tells the whole team they registered. Then, also send an email internally and also add it to a Google spreadsheet." You can do stuff like that.

Brandt Krueger:

Yes, like an ultra-integrator. Yeah. There's a couple different platforms. If this then that but that's more like home automation, things like that and this is more the business version of that.

Will Curran:

Yeah. Zapier's a fantastic tool but as I hinted at earlier, things can go wrong. It hiccups for any reason or you hit your limit on your amount of API integrations, for example. Things can go wrong in these integrations. I usually find that if it's not using a native integration, meaning if you go in the tool and say, "Connect to," and it doesn't go to Zapier and it literally connects directly to the tool, that's a native integration. I find those really work because they've been developed by both teams to make sure that they're both working perfectly together versus, "Oh, hey. We're going to bolt this onto Zapier and you're kind of relying on Zapier to do most of the heavy lifting.

Will Curran:

In its similar way, Zapier is its own specialized tool. You have to ... Well, oh, gosh, I'm going to write this to my notes. I have a con to this side of specialized tools. I'm going to write down real quick before I forget but essentially, I think that you do definitely need to make sure that you have integrations. If you're going to choose specialized, it has to natively integrate to as many tools that you use as possible. I get it. It's not always going to integrate to everything but think about your work flow and where you want it to go.

Will Curran:

So, let me provide an example of this. So, for example, I use a tool called Lattice. It's a tool that we use to manage our whole team, do one-on-one management, employ goal setting, feed surveys for employees. I didn't want to have to control two different databases of employees. I didn't want to have to always every single time I sign up for a tool add another user to it. Has everyone ever been there before, especially in their business, they go, "Oh, I'm going to send for all these tools." Then, you sign up a new employee and you're like, "Okay." And you spend an hour literally signing them up and adding them to all, you have to add them to Google Suite and then you have to add them to this tool. Then, you have to add them into Slack and things like that.

Will Curran:

I wanted to make it so they signed up once so I actually found a tool that managed all of my employees in one single database so when they signed up for that database, boom. It automatically signed them up for tools like Lattice and G Suites and everything like that. That's a great example of integrations and how you can take your existing workflow and integrate it in to do something and save you time and make sure that integration saves you time, because to integrate to integrate is kind of a worthless thing. If you're like, "Oh, hey. We share this database," but there's no reason they need to share databases, is it really needed? I can go all over that one, just go all over the place.

Brandt Krueger:

No. I think you made the point. It's one of those things, it's kind of like going back to, as one of the pros that we mentioned for the all-in-ones is if data integration is really important to you, this is the next level down so the all-in-ones are going to make sure that those integrations between modules work seamlessly. If you are going to start ... Not rolling your own because we used that already for building your own stuff but if you are going to put together your own modules based on different services, then making sure that those integrations are seamless is kind of the next level down for making sure that your data is flowing properly from site to site and using native integrations as opposed to some kind of third party.

Will Curran:

Totally. And so the pro tip I have for you is if you are looking at those different tools, look for that integrations page on their website. Two hints, if it's not in the main navigation at the top of the web page, it's always at the bottom. So, usually when I go to a new SaaS tools, I'm like, "Oh, this is really cool." I'll look at the top. If I can't find the integrations page, I scroll to the bottom because that's where it exists and then if I then still can't find it, I usually Google the name of the software and integrations to find a hidden page that lists their integrations and look at it and see what they integrate with, what's working really well and does it [existingly 00:31:21] work with the tools that you already have? Again, if you're going to choose a specialized way, it can suck up so much time if you're doing manual entry and you don't have to do manual entry.

Will Curran:

So, all right. My gosh, there's so much stuff I love to talk about when it comes to this. I remember, I said I was going to write a tool but I just decided to write a bunch of gibberish because I was-

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. I know. It sounds like-

Will Curran:

... just not able.

Brandt Krueger:

... that's got to stand for something. So, just because everybody knows.

Will Curran:

It's got to stand for something.

Brandt Krueger:

... Will wrote down to remember later was, "CFB CBC."

Will Curran:

And I was just like, "Oh, I'll totally remember what I was talking about when I read that again," and I don't remember what I was finally talking about.

Brandt Krueger:

It's the confined flipping broadcast consumer beta context. Was that what it was? That's what you wanted to remember, wasn't it?

Will Curran:

Damn! That's it. Yeah! Totally. That's when the thing happens with the thingy with the thingy. But I think, I mean to kind of flip it from integrations over, when you're utilizing specialized tools, I think one of the big benefits that you get is that kind of the very, very, we're good at one thing.

Will Curran:

I recently, an example of how I switched from one software to the other for people that think about how I think about this is that I've seen tools that start off specialized and they eventually move to be kind of a jack-of-all-trades generalist master platform.

Will Curran:

And a great example of this is Notion. Notion's a great internal wiki software, write notes in it. Well, they started adding all these extra features. What I realize that originally, I just bought it to be a wiki for the company, have all of our step-by-step guides and all of our documents in one place without having to navigate a Google Doc folders. Kind of next step up.

Will Curran:

Well, what ends up happening is they ended up adding more and more features. I think one of the big downsides of sometimes when a generalist starts to move towards a larger one, I guess is another con for master is that it can sometimes slow it down, too. So, Notion went from being a zippy, quick software that you can just write things in real quick, it just seemed bloated. It took me longer and longer to do the original task I wanted to do. Sure, it could do way more.

Will Curran:

So, what I ended up happening is I end up switching to Slab. The reason why I chose Slab, as I said, "We're good at one thing. We do company wikis really, really well." They're like, "We're not going to add a million other features. We're just going to do that one thing really, really well." I really appreciate that because, for me, a tool when I pick it, I need to know why I'm choosing it and maybe that's an overarching theme for when you're choosing different ones is choose why.

Will Curran:

When you're choosing master or you're choosing specialist, why are you picking these tools? For me, I could have kept with Notion because yeah, all those features are really cool. Sure, I could have started putting more things into it and utilizing it more but for me, I was like, "No. I just needed the ability to write step-by-step guides very, very fast and I need it to be extremely reliable. That's it." That ended up helping me make the decisions .

Brandt Krueger:

But anyone that listens to our shows, whether it's Event Icons or Event Tech Podcast, that's a recurring theme. It's always starting with the why, always starting with the goals of what you're trying to achieve, not just what's the new shiny, shiny? What's the new thing that's coming along?

Brandt Krueger:

So, just because everybody and their dog is using platform X, it does not mean it's the best platform for you. There's literally hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of event apps that are out there. So, just because everyone's using this company or everyone's using that company does not mean that that's the right platform for you.

Brandt Krueger:

We've said this before. Most of what event apps do, 80% of it is the same but that last 20 or 10%, depending on what you need, is so important of what they specialize in in that particular field.

Brandt Krueger:

You brought up a really interesting question and I'm curious to know, you kind of hinted at it but what's your overall take about how you feel about when you've got a specialist that starts adding more and more features and becoming more of a generalist? In your experience, how often do you feel that works versus how often do you feel that doesn't work?

Will Curran:

Yeah. I think as a hardcore software user, I can very much tell when it's done to either increase revenue or just to try to stay competitive versus it being a natural transition. I think, for example, HubSpot adding sales and then adding service was a natural transition because they slowly started kind of bringing it out and started realizing, "Hey, this customer conversation is about everything, not just about marketing. It's about sales and it's also about service," and they call it the flywheel and all this jazz. So that's, I think, a good example of it.

Will Curran:

However, I have seen it where it's been done just to be able to make more money as well and I usually find that it comes down to the really having a critical conversation about the app because sometimes, it's really easy to fanboy over apps. If you ever had conversation with anybody. I mean, obviously, you talk to me and I'm praising HubSpot, everyone has an opinion on software. I think you need to be really cognizant of that because sometimes, people very much can get attached to something and not know what else is out there. I think sometimes what ends up happening is a lot of the people will say, "Oh, yeah. You know, I really love this app because it does everything," but they don't realize, "Oh, wait. Maybe there's these other options out there."

Will Curran:

So, I think, yeah, it depends and depends on why, again, yeah, why they're doing it. I would say that it also depends on where they're moving into. Does it make sense, right?

Brandt Krueger:
Yeah.

Will Curran:
Because I also get worried when I see a tool start to add too many tools that aren't related to what they do. That's where I think you really start to get that master of none.

Brandt Krueger:
Because, yeah, that's where it actually start portion of master of none, yeah, where it's not very good at any one of the things that it wants to be. Even though, like I say, that's kind of a negative connotation but sometimes you need it.

Brandt Krueger:
I have a real affinity for apps and services that stay in their lane. We're good at this and very intentionally and very slowly add features as necessary, so it's not just one client saying, "Oh, I need it to do this." Okay, great. We'll make it do that. Yeah. You have to have enough of a groundswell for a particular feature or for a particular way of doing things or UI change or something like that. Sorry, jargon jail. That's user interface, so how it looks. How it looks, how easy is it to use.

Will Curran:
User interface.

Brandt Krueger:
Not changing things just willy-nilly but really doing it intentionally like we should with our events, so changing things on purpose, changing things intentionally as opposed to just whatever's new and hot.

Brandt Krueger:
So, I've got a real affinity for apps that try and stay in their lane and don't try and slowly turn or ... Actually, probably slowly is the better way to put it. So, don't try and quickly take yourself from being a specialist to a generalist or a juggernaut of some kind. They don't want to be the next giant platform.

Brandt Krueger:
So, that's I think something to keep ... For me, I guess I would throw that in the red flag category. So, if you start landing on a piece of software and you start seeing them add really left-field things, really kind of pushing back a little bit and saying, "Why is that being added," and, "What else is on the roadmap?" If it's this weird, Bizzaro roadmap of features, you might

want to start looking around for something else because it doesn't usually end well when they start rushing things out and then trying to be everything to everybody.

Will Curran:

I think you're bringing up a good point, too. If you're evaluating, for example, a generalist all-in-one tool, too, it's to ask yourself, "Do I need all these features?" Because sometimes what ends up happening is you set out to accomplish one thing. Let's say it's registration, for example. You're like, "I just need a great registration tool." You find another tool and you're like, "Wow! It also does this," and, "Oh, it does event apps? Oh, it also does signage? It also does this and this and that." Yeah, it sounds exciting but you didn't even plan on utilizing it for that. I would also be careful of that as well because, hey, you might end up paying more money or you might think, "Oh, hey. I'm going to totally utilize this," but you don't end up utilizing it as well. Just seems like a sexy oh, cool, new and neat feature.

Will Curran:

You have to ask yourself, "Do I even have time to even think about these other extra features that I'm going to get or do I want this one single thing to do this really, really well?"

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. Exactly.

Will Curran:

I think one other thing to think about when it comes to specialization and I think that we mentioned the cost of some of these all-in-one platforms but something to keep in mind is while specialist tools do seem cheaper individually. Let's say it's \$10 a month or \$100 a month but as someone who has, I think, I've really got to count the number of it. Let me look real quick. I think it's something like over 100 different tools, our whole company uses and that I use all the time. I'm going to literally quickly pull it up.

Will Curran:

Oh, my gosh. I'm at 90 different tools. I'm mean, that's also including Chrome extensions and things like that, too, but when you're at that point where you have so many different tools, it adds up just as quick as having the master all-in-one tool, too. Is that you might think to yourself, "Oh, it's only \$10," but then you need another tool that does \$10 and another one and another one. Before you know it, you're up to that \$1,000 a month that that all-in-one is going to potentially be. So, something to just keep in mind is as you start to break it out is do you end up spending more money in the end run doing the specialist version as well.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. That's a great point, Will. The other thing to bear in mind is not just you but the rest of your team, the rest of your employees. You might be perfectly comfortable with 90 different apps for your company but that might be a bit intimidating. Will, you and I are different people. We're both geeky nerds.

Will Curran:

Speak at your own experience.

Brandt Krueger:

You are way more comfortable having 47 different platforms to do something than I am, whereas I tend to, I like my five or six platforms to do things whereas you're always trying really new things in a specific calendar integration that does this. I will take a look at that one you sent me, by the way, and whereas I tend to just find the thing that I like and use it. I think some of that has to do with age and generations and things like that as well. As we get older, we tend to settle into our platforms and things and go, "Well, that's the way it works."

Brandt Krueger:

But it is a good point. I think that you need to not only think of yourself but also your team. You might have people on your team that might be uncomfortable having five different, the log-ins for five different things for the five different to make your event go. So, bearing in mind who the people that you work with as well, who are your internal stakeholders is something to keep in mind as well so I think that's a great kind of ... I'm assuming pretty close to final point as we start to wrap this up.

Will Curran:

Yeah. Totally, totally. I mean, I also want to just avoid because definitely we're start to blur it into just general evaluation but I do think that's a very specific good point is that if you are deciding to use a lot of tools, be careful of people who might not be comfortable with lots of platforms. I will tell you speaking 100% from experience, at Endless, we have tons of employees who get on and they get so overwhelmed with the amount of different tools that we use. I mean, it's evident. I hop on all the time in Slack, like, "Oh, guys. Check out this new tool." They're like, "Oh, god. It's another tool."

Brandt Krueger:

Will's at it again. Oh, jeez!

Will Curran:

"Oh, Will. You know, Will's at it again." And I totally, I'm very aware of that but you have to be extremely aware of that as well and so not throwing all these different tools on someone all at once but also then I think, to circle back to this Slab/Notion thing is make sure there's good documentation that explains it all or a good training program in general because, yes, the last thing you want is for them to have to learn 100 different platforms and some people will be comfortable with it. Most people will not be.

Will Curran:

Yeah. I think we've covered a ton of ground on this, specialist and versus all in one tools . I don't know if there's one...

Brandt Krueger:

... what we normally throw the guests so what's your one takeaway from this day, if you could choose the one thing that kind of summarizes this debate, what would it be? Deep.

Will Curran:

Really deep. I'm never prepared to answer our own questions. Whenever, I'll ask interview questions of people, I'm like, "Oh, what's your answer to that?" They'll be like, "Oh!" Yes.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. I'll let you think about that for now. So, for me personally, it always goes back to the why. It all, that's on all of this stuff, we've given you a lot to chew on as far as the pros and cons of each, but I think as long as you start with the why, what are you really trying to accomplish? What's your goal? Is it get it done good enough time saving because you've got a thousand things other to do or is it really deep-dive data where you need the data to be integrated and working seamlessly from registration to event app because you're going to be using that data for personalization or something along those lines?

Brandt Krueger:

All of it, for me, boils down to why are you doing this? Why do you need this software? What is it for? Whose life are you trying to improve? The attendees, yours, your teams? All of those things, it always comes back to the why.

Will Curran:

I think that's a super-duper solid point. I was actually almost going to pick that one.

Brandt Krueger:

Too slow!

Will Curran:

I'm going to call that the all-in-one tip because that one covers everything no matter what and I think it covers-

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. It's kind of cheating.

Will Curran:

... topics we will have in the future as well. Yeah, a little bit.

Will Curran:

So, ironically, I'll choose this specialist tip that is hyperspecific to the conversation we had and I think if you have to walk away with one thing in choosing event platforms, it's to understand how integrations work and understanding that tip I gave of finding the integrations page and seeing

what it integrates with. I think far too many people don't ever look at that page on a website. If they do, they just kind of look for logos and, "Okay. I'm good." But understanding native versus Zapier integrations, understanding how the integrations are work, what it actually does, which ways it goes, all that sort of stuff, I think can really benefit you when choosing platforms because integrations I think are the number one, yes, I'll say this right now. Integrations are the number one most important thing I believe in software because far too often, we pick tool that don't integrate and we spend more time copying/pasting, never seeing that data go between each other. I think the reason why our software tools are so powerful is because we share the data amongst them and we're able to see correlations, save time,-

Brandt Krueger:
Nice, nice.

Will Curran:
... all those sorts ...

Brandt Krueger:
Well, it's a great topic. I really hope everyone enjoyed it out there. Will, thank you so much for bashing this around with me a little bit. What's going on in Endless these days?

Will Curran:
Totally. Yeah. So, actually I was going to ... I had one you had mentioned it and I thought it would be really cool to share. Endless just continuing up on its normal stuff, just crushing it on content stuff. A lot of really cool things coming up we're up really, really soon with some really cool new stuff. Can't talk about it, of course, but one thing I did want to share about audiences randomly is that you mentioned a tool I shared with you. I just found it and I think it's super awesome and I don't really get a chance to share it.

Brandt Krueger:
Yeah, yeah. I didn't ask you the usual guest questions of what's floating your boat these days?

Will Curran:
Yeah, yeah. If you had one. Yeah. So, check out this new app I'm using called Clockwise. I just found it a couple days ago. It just hit number one on Product Hunt for the month. All my favorite content people in the app space were talking about it. It's basically an AI tool that rearranges your teams' calendars so make it so you have more back-to-back meetings instead of having so many meetings with big little short gaps between it.

Will Curran:
So, the problem is, for example, me, I spent most of my time in meeting and talking to people. The problem becomes is that the way scheduling works is that you start with your weekly meetings that already exist and then people tend to just fill in the gaps where they can but no one really tries to push meetings really, really close to each other. So, what ends up happening

is as everybody knows the most important thing for work is that you get large, uninterrupted times of focus time, they call it. Three, four hours of block time for you to just work on one single task, no interruptions.

Will Curran:

What ends up happening, though, with a lot of these meetings and I'm sure this happens to everybody is that you end up spending an hour into a meeting. Then, you have a 30-minute gap. Then, you have another hour meeting. Then, you have a 15-minute gap. You never get that large uninterrupted space time.

Will Curran:

Basically, this tool, Clockwise essentially automatically finds where those meetings are and if there's big gaps, it automatically reschedules them for you, amazing. It's so cool. It does things like put in blocked focus time automatically for you during the week, where your gaps are so no one can schedule meetings over it. It integrates with, talk about integrations, integrates with Slack so when you have focus time, it automatically mutes your Slack and everything like that. What other crazy things does it do? It just goes on and on. Does a bunch of really crazy things. Is one of the most powerful calendar tools I've seen. I'm really, really excited to see where it goes as time goes on but definitely check out Clockwise. It will blow your mind.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. I'll have to play with it. I get nervous when AI starts handling personal interactions like rearranging meetings and things like that but I love the idea of it maybe putting in those blocks where it puts in the block and then, and I'll have to look into see if it's doing what I think you're saying it's doing. It puts in a block to say, "Okay. This is focus time," but then, as necessary, is opening up space around other meetings so that things can get pushed together. Okay.

Will Curran:

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Essentially, yeah. It's like a personal assistant automatically. It's hard to explain, too, because I first looked at it. When something gets pushed so high to the Product Hunt list, I usually start to kind of, "Oh, what is this all about?" And I remember just reading some gist of it. I was, "Oh, I'll check it out," but didn't really fully understand it until I installed it and started playing around with it a little bit more. I will admit, it's not perfect. It's not going to rearrange your external meetings. It is really focused on internal meetings, lots of your one on ones and things of that because the idea with it is that all of your team connects it to Clockwise. Then, Clockwise just works together on its own for your internal meetings primarily which I think that is also a really good thing because maybe eventually it'll get to the point where it does external automatically for you but they know that obviously internal, you're a little bit more forgiving it if accidentally moves something around but what's great about it is you tell it what time you want to work. You tell it when you want to have your lunches, do you want to have travel time in either end of the meeting? It's just really, really cool.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. Yeah, nice.

Will Curran:
Highly recommend it.

Brandt Krueger:
Sounds like something worth looking into. Just to close it out on that, Will mentioned it a couple of times. If you're an app junkie like he is, Product Hunt is a great source for that. They daily have services of what kind of software people talking about, what's new that just came out. So, it's a great way to discover new products and then also they get rapidly voted on like, "Yes, this is cool. Yes, this worked great." So, you can really start to see what's bubbling up quickly. So, anybody who's interested in staying on top of that stuff, it is general. It's not specific to the event industry. It's going to be a little bit of everything in there.

Will Curran:
Yeah, definitely, definitely. I think we need to make an event industry-

Brandt Krueger:
An events Product Hunt.

Will Curran:
... Product Hunt or something like that.

Brandt Krueger:
I looked into that very early on but it was something, there's so many apps and things in the event industry, I personally couldn't do it but maybe we can figure out a way. We've bounced this around for a little bit. Maybe that'll happen someday.

Brandt Krueger:
All right. Anything else going on with you, man?

Will Curran:
Yeah. Give us a ... No, I was going to say, if you like that idea for the event Product Hunt or something like that, just shoot us an email or tweet us and tell us you like that idea and we'd love hearing it.

Will Curran:
But no, I did want to give some shout outs to all the people we were just finishing up a couple big conferences and gaining a lot of love from all of our listeners so thank you guys so much for when we saw you in person, giving us some love but definitely give us a shout. Let us know what you like, dislike, all that sort of stuff because we really do appreciate that from you guys big time.

